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BRINE-CURED COD

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On the Atlantic coast, brine-cured cod is prepared commercially in small quantities for local distribution. This is done principally by shore fishermen in the State of Maine. On the Pacific coast, it is packed in the Puget Sound area. While some of the brine-cured cod is sold locally, the principal market is in the Scandinavian-American trade of the Middle West. It is also prepared by commercial fishermen on both coasts for home consumption. The fishermen themselves prefer brine-cured cod. It rehydrates more readily, and the flavor is said to be superior to dry-salt cod.

Pollock also are prepared by brine-curing on the Atlantic coast. Haddock were once brine-cured to a considerable extent but this use is only occasional today. Hake and cusk are rarely, if ever, brine-cured commercially.

The fish are dressed, split, and washed as in dry salting. Larger fish are sometimes split into halves. When the washed fish have drained sufficiently, they are salted in hogsheads as if preparing for drying. It was formerly customary to call for a special curing salt, such as Liverpool or Trapani salt; Lunenberg salt, for example, was a favorite in brine curing cod. This is no longer true; any good commercial salt may be used provided it has a medium-size grain. A three-quarter ground salt is preferable.

A thin layer of salt is scattered on the bottom of the hogshead. Salt is rubbed into the flesh of each fish and they are packed in the hogshead, flesh side up. A scattering of salt is thrown over each layer of fish, taking particular care that salt is present where fish overlap each other. Each layer is packed at right angles to the preceding layer. The top layer of fish is packed with skin side up, and a heavier layer of salt sprinkled on top. The top may be weighted down to keep pieces of fish submerged after the brine forms. The top should be covered with brine in 24 hours, but at least a week will be required for the fish to be "struck through" or cured. Salt is used in the proportion of 35 pounds to 100 pounds of fish.

The cod are allowed to remain in brine until required for sale. They are then removed and repacked in barrels holding 200 lbs.; half-barrels of 100 lbs.; and kits or tubs holding 50 or 25 lbs. The weights given are those of the fish, the amount of brine is additional. Each piece of fish is scrubbed as it is repacked in the shipping container, and a small amount of salt is scattered on each layer of fish, using 15 to 20 lbs. of salt to 100 lbs. of fish. After the barrel is headed, it is filled through

the bunghole with brine testing at least 90° salinometer. The product ships quite well, and does not require special handling in storage so long as the barrels are tight and the brine does not leak out.

Some of the smaller operators pack the cod directly in shipping containers after splitting, adding salt in the proportion given above. Brine forms naturally. hen the cure is completed and the fish have settled down in the barrel, a few more fish are added to the top.

NOTE.--This leaflet supersedes Memorandum S-1, issued by the former Bureau of Fisheries.